
Address to the Overseas Security Advisory Council 23rd Annual Conference

**By
Condoleezza Rice
Former Secretary of State**

[The following is an excerpt of the keynote address by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, given at the Dean Acheson Auditorium, Washington, D.C., November 19, 2008.]

I am delighted that you are here to discuss the security challenges that we face as we pursue our work abroad. The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) is an extraordinary partnership, and I want to thank you for your support and for your ideas. You play an important role in helping to shape the world's view of America and how we maintain our security and how we engage with our neighbors in their countries. And you do so reflecting both our values and our goals.

As many of you know, in 1985, then Secretary of State George Shultz, my good friend and my mentor, recognized the growing threat posed by international terrorism to Americans living and working abroad. Secretary Shultz believed that we needed a dynamic forum for sharing ideas and information on security between our public and private sectors. To achieve that end, he created the Overseas Security Advisory Council, or OSAC, which initially comprised fifteen American companies and the Department of State (DoS) and the Department of Commerce (DoC).

Today, the wisdom of that decision 23 years later has never been clearer. OSAC has grown into a partnership encompassing twelve federal agencies and over 5,600 private groups, from business to academia and nongovernmental and faith-based communities. OSAC is a model of a public-private partnership working cooperatively to achieve the shared aim of keeping Americans overseas safe as they pursue their professional and personal goals around the world. Americans live and work and travel abroad more securely because of the success of this OSAC partnership.

The importance of your work is seen again and again. One milestone this year was OSAC's coordination during the Beijing Olympics, which provided in-depth consultation and assistance to hundreds of companies involved in the Games. OSAC has also played a crucial role in helping Americans and American institutions respond to terrorist attacks. In the face of the bombing at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad and the armed attack against our embassy in Sanaa, OSAC quickly gathered security information and shared that information; and that was used, in turn, to brief senior Department officials and private security chief security officers. OSAC has always used its newly formed institutions well. And the latest, its hotel sector institution to disseminate information and keep other hotels in the region informed about the security situation, is going to be a very important innovation.

Perhaps the best example of OSAC's ability to provide an information-sharing platform for the private sector is the Country Council Program, which is designed to help U.S. businesses and organizations maintain effective security procedures tailored to the specific countries where they operate. Today, there are over 100 Country Councils attached to U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. I am particularly pleased that OSAC officials visited Baghdad in June to help establish a Country Council Program there. A robust and active Country Council Program in Iraq will be critical to American interests as the security situation there continues to improve and as the U.S. private sector returns to Iraq.

I am impressed too with OSAC's efforts to attract new partners. OSAC's, outreach to colleges and universities has caused this sector to grow to more than 300 educational institutions. As a

diplomat, I know the benefits derived by American students studying abroad. Often, after living in a new culture and struggling with a new language, our students return home with a concept of themselves and their country that is renewed by the experience. They too are often our greatest ambassadors, not just telling but living the American story of opportunity and freedom. But as a university provost, I also know that the benefits of study abroad will be diminished or even disappear if we do not confront the security challenges facing American students abroad. In this regard, OSAC is playing an important role; and the recent OSAC conference at Texas Tech on security and foreign studies exemplifies the collaboration that is essential to safe and secure travel for American students around the world.

So, today, the mission of OSAC is more critical than ever. We are in a world, post-September 11, 2001, in which we are safer, but not yet safe. Therefore, continued and evolving threats throughout the world place at risk our ability to showcase American innovation, education, and humanitarian efforts. OSAC remains a relevant and vital public-private partnership to safeguard American lives and interests overseas. I want to thank you for your commitment to our diplomatic mission. I want to thank you for our security. And I want to thank you for your dedication to the essential work that must be done abroad. And on a personal note, I want to thank each and every one of you for what you do every day toward this mission [and] what you will continue to do. And you can be certain that I will be very proud and pleased to pass on to my successor the great story of OSAC, the great work of OSAC, and the great partnership that we have developed.